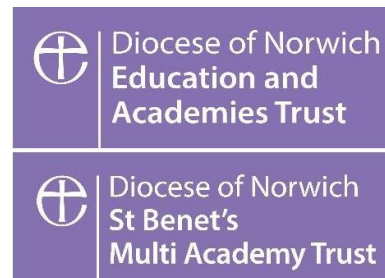


By wisdom a house is built; and by understanding it is established: By knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.
Proverbs 24: 3 – 24: 4 (ESV)



BY EMAIL

FAO: Sara Tough
Executive Director of Children's Services
Norfolk County Council, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DL

25th June 2024

Dear Sara,

We write collectively, to share our disappointment and shock in relation to the allocation of SEND funding to schools for 2024/25 as shared in SEND memorandums with schools this week.

Here is a reminder of how this news has been shared with schools:

- On 3rd June 2024 you wrote to all schools saying that there would be changes to the Element 3 funding approach for SEND (which would be 'likely to be lower') 'and we will be in contact with you next week';
- Two weeks later, on 18th June 2024 an email was sent to all schools entitled 'Element 3 Funding update' which included details of the reduction.

This shows a significant actual reduction of funding for specific pupils from September 2024, of between 21% and 48% for different Trusts with whom we have been in contact. This in turn means that in many instances staff will not be able to deliver the support that children with additional needs are entitled to and require and, in many cases, as set out in their Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs). As you will be aware, LA colleagues have been telling us throughout the year, to budget on a like funding basis for funding pupils for 2024/25.

Against an already very tight financial picture this will result in significant redundancies across schools in Norfolk. The effect on children will be negative in the extreme and **will** result in a significant spike in exclusions across the county, as schools will have a hugely reduced ability to keep specifically funded children safe or able to learn. This comes with huge costs, both for the children and to the LA, who will, ultimately, have to educate children that have been excluded. The alternative to increased exclusions would be that other children's experience of school is extremely negatively impacted, along with that of our staff who will be under increased pressure.

The information about the reduction in funding comes just four weeks before the summer holidays. To date it has not been shared with Trusts (the bodies with ultimate responsibility for school budgets) but only with schools, which highlights a huge and continuing lack of understanding by the LA of school Trusts and requires us to gather our own school level information. To our knowledge, the changes were not consulted on, and the memorandums clearly cover only two terms of funding, as the full-year changes would have required a consultation process.

Community - Courage - Kindness - Wisdom

The timing leaves us with no ability to plan to 'do different' with the reduced funding for next year. Although redundancies will be our only option to achieve a balanced budget, we do not even have time to implement this for many of the affected staff before September, given that many will have notice periods of up to twelve weeks.

As a group of CEOs, we strongly request that you meet with us to engage in meaningful discussion on this matter and to avoid the cliff edge which has been created through this announcement. Although writing as CEOs of Trusts, we want to state that the reduction in funding will be applied to all schools in Norfolk and so will affect all children within the county.

We have calculated what we believe are the financial impacts based on the limited information provided by the Local Authority. The percentage reductions and cash amounts for each Trust that is a signatory to this letter are:

- DNEAT 48% reduction, circa £1million
- St Benet's Multi Academy Trust 21%, circa £256,000
- St. John the Baptist Catholic Multi Academy Trust 30%, circa £177,000
- Synergy Multi Academy Trust (data tbc)
- Broad Horizons Education Trust 27%, circa £549,000

The children of Norfolk deserve better than this.

Yours sincerely,



*Oliver Burwood (CEO, DNEAT MAT), Richard Cranmer (CEO, St Benet's MAT),
Kim Payne (CEO, St John the Baptist Catholic MAT), Louise Lee (CEO, Synergy MAT) and
Owen Jenkins (COO, Broad Horizons MAT)*